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SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT
AS A COMPONENT OF HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department of Education Theory, Policy, and Practice

by
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B.A., Louisiana State University, 2009
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine spirituality in terms of development among college students. A review of literature and best practices was conducted, and students were interviewed regarding their spiritual identities, their collegiate experiences, and the relationship between the two. The findings of this study show that college students value spirituality in multiple ways, although they are typically uncomfortable discussing spirituality and spiritual issues on campus.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The field of student development theory in higher education is a vast area of research. Student development theories and theory work cover a broad spectrum of factors that contribute to the creation of identity within college students. There are numerous models, which student affairs practitioners apply to their work when developing or implementing programs or events. All of the theories are ultimately aimed at fashioning an overall understanding of students so that professionals are better skilled to guide them toward success as an entire person. Holistic development is an important part of the college experience, as student development theories focus on how students progress from reliance upon others or outside factors to reliance upon themselves (Baxter Magolda, 2009). By studying and understanding the many different components of individuals that contribute to the make-up of the college student population, researchers and professionals are able to develop a deeper understanding of an individual student as a whole. There are studies and theories based in race, age, gender, sexuality, and choice of college. This results in campus services, programs, or events that are focused on these demographic areas. As the constitution of the student body of higher education in the United States continues to grow and diversify, the theories and focuses on student development also seem to be expanding, reaching deeper, and focusing more closely than before.

However, despite this growth in research, there is one area of student development that has traditionally been omitted from the overall reporting on student development. Spiritual development has been an interest of college students yet has gone relatively unaddressed by student affairs administrators (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2011). There is an entire component of identity that practitioners in the field of higher education and student affairs have, until fairly recently, neglected. The focus of many practices in the field tend to focus on guiding students

towards attaining tangible results, such as a job, grade, or leadership opportunity. As Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (2011) state:

While higher education continues to put a lot of emphasis on test scores, grades, credits, and degrees, it has increasingly come to neglect its' students 'inner' development—the sphere of values and beliefs, emotional maturity, moral development, spirituality, and of self-understanding (p. 2).

This inner development serves as the base for students to create and nurture their own sense of personal and professional identities. When observing the various offices dedicated towards student affairs or student services across a campus, it is apparent that students' own personal beliefs and morals weigh heavily on their experience and involvement, as demonstrated in career or personality assessments, choosing a student organization to join, or developing and supporting a political idea or party.

American higher education has undergone a radical change since its conception, the most evident being the fact that higher education was developed around religion and now the presence of religion, faith, or spirituality is noticeably absent. Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (2011) explain the reasons behind this drastic shift.

Whereas spiritual aspects of student development were cornerstones of early American college curricula, the Enlightenment ideals, positivistic models of thinking, and scientific worldviews that began to exert a powerful influence on American thought in the late nineteenth century have continued to dominate societal values and individual goal orientations (Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, 2011, p. 139).

The absence of spiritual development practices, conversations, or initiatives on college campuses can be traced back to an address by Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist Associate in 1802. The comments that Jefferson made in this address have resonated throughout American history, creating a palpable effect on areas, such as education. In this address, Jefferson stated:

Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign

reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," thus building a wall of separation between Church & State (Hutson, 1998).

Higher education's fear of combining "church and state" has led to its ignorance of the spiritual needs and beliefs of its campus community. However, it is important to understand that spirituality is not religion.

Spirituality is a very abstract term, and one, as of yet, that has been very difficult to define. There are various ways in which spirituality has been defined. For some it can be money, God, or power. Fried (2001), as cited by Speck (2005), describes spirituality as "the ability to experience connection and create meaning in one's life" (p. 4). As stated by Büssing et al. (2010), Underwood and Tanyi (2002) defined spirituality as "an individual and open approach in the search for meaning and purpose in life" (p. 27). Meraviglia (1999) defines spirituality as "the experiences and expressions of one's spirit in a unique and dynamic process reflecting faith in God or a supreme being; a connectedness with oneself, others, natures, or God; and an integration of all human dimensions" (p. 18). Parks (2000) states that spirituality is an individual's quest for meaning, purpose, and "apprehension of spirit (or Spirit) as the animating essence at the core of life" (p. 16). Spirituality, for the purposes of this study, is the belief, reliance, or acknowledgment of something that plays a central role in one's life. Conversely, religion is the subscription to and practice of a specified set of viewpoints and rules based upon a belief system. While the two can be closely linked to each other, they are separate ideas. Another key term for this study is that of holistic development. Holistic development "include[s] emotional, intellectual, social, interpersonal, moral, and physical growth and maturity" (Eberhardt & Dalton, 2007, p. 268).

In recent years, the amount of research and literature published in this area has grown, as it is becoming increasingly obvious that spirituality and spiritual development are a significant area in which students define themselves. Love and Talbot (1999) explain why this is becoming more commonplace and should continue to do so:

There are several reasons for including spirituality in the discourse and scholarship of the student affairs profession. The first is based on a very traditional and closely held assumption of the profession: the value of holistic student development. By failing to address students' spiritual development in practice and research, we are ignoring an important aspect of their development. Another reason is that these concepts are being addressed in other related helping professions and in academic disciplines that have traditionally informed our practice, such as psychology, health, social work, counseling, nursing, and teaching and learning (Talbot & Love, 1999, p. 362).

There is also a growing body of literature dedicated to the idea of meaning making in holistic student development, which delineate connections to spirituality and spiritual development as the starting point for many students' journey through meaning making, as well as new studies and published works that are dedicated to the spiritual identities and developments of college students. The research in this area is constantly increasing, educating professionals but also creating more questions.

Examining student development theory, it is evident that there are numerous viewpoints and models as it relates to development of racial, ethnic, gender-based, or sexual orientation identity. These focuses are in place in hopes to enhance the student learning experience by allowing college students to understand the lenses through which they view themselves, their classmates, and the world around them. However, higher education administrators neglect students' spiritual identities or needs, which students have stated is something they value individually (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2011). Spirituality and spiritual identity serve as the foundation upon which students create meaning of their world and understand its complexities, as a spiritual identity is where one fashions values, viewpoints, ethics, and principles. It is

important that practitioners and administrators focus on the all of the various components with which students develop their identity as “the primary goal of higher education should not be the imparting of facts, but the transforming of people—enabling students to address their fundamental questions, and in the process, to become (rather than learn about) the answers they seek” (Scott, Buehler, & Felder, 2001, p. 99).

There is a substantial need to understand, support, and encourage spiritual development in higher education. The multiple entities in student affairs on a campus are all working simultaneously to create and foster some sort of student success. From a professional standpoint, it is quite easy to become consumed with one specific area or set of learning outcomes. In the eyes of a student, however, the work that administrators and practitioners of higher education perform in those designated silos create the fabric of the student’s collegiate experience. Therefore, the personal morals, ethics, beliefs, and values of the student serve as the common thread between the multitude of student services and experiences available to them. There is no widely accepted theory devoted to holistic development, but there is an overwhelming consensus in higher education to stimulate and support growth, development, maturity, and education of the student in order to create a higher level of understanding, analyzing, and meaning-making. In looking at Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (1943), it appears that the ultimate needs people seek to fulfill are those related to self-actualization, such as personal growth and fulfillment, which very easily lend themselves to the realm of spiritual development and understanding the “inner self.”

The purpose of this study is to identify the impact that spiritual development has on holistic development. It is clear that spirituality is an important part of a student’s identity, whether or not that student believes identifies as a religious person. However, the exact linkage between holistic student development and success and the spiritual development of students has

not yet been explained by research. Examining current best practices in all areas of higher education across the nation, it is evident that there is a strong emphasis on creating well-rounded graduates, be it through the completion of general education requirements, encouragement to participate in on-campus activities or organizations, the growing availability of study abroad opportunities, or even the grand expansions of student wellness centers or recreational complexes. All of these elements of a college campus may seem disjointed, but each sphere of the campus experience contributes to the development and support of the whole student. Noticeably absent are widely available initiatives that focus strictly on the maturing of a student's morals, beliefs, or spiritual needs, which oftentimes serve as the basis for decision-making. In hopes to more fully comprehend the connection between spiritual development and overall student development, this researcher will conduct interviews about spirituality with college students, as well as draw upon noted researchers, publications, theories, and models in the field of higher education and related fields.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Student affair practitioners place a large amount of emphasis on the understanding and practice of student development. This key idea in the profession touches a plethora of areas, from programming to curriculum, and it is ever broadening to address new subpopulations of college students. This continual splintering of development theories leaves some students or some elements of identity unaddressed. While there has never been a set of theories that fully addressed holistic development, all theories tend to point back to the idea of achieve positive growth and change. The roots of higher education are based in personal development, but with the advent of technology and the expansion of knowledge across the curriculum, more focus has been placed on the acquisition of practical knowledge. Since the early 1940s, there has been an acute focus on the development of students in higher education (Student Personnel Point of View, 1937, 1949). However, with the growth of industry, technology, and information, some of the characteristics that comprise an individual have been overlooked, namely the spiritual development of college students. The separation between religion and state entities has placed a strong stigma against the discussion of spirituality in higher education, but recent developments in student development theory exhibit the importance of these discussions.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF STUDENT DEVELOPMENT THEORY

Student development is one of the core concepts upon which the student affairs profession was built (Student Personnel Point of View, 1937, 1949). In the early foundations of higher education, traces of student development were apparent in the concept of *in loco parentis*, for example. Judy Raper (2001) describes this concept and why it disappeared from higher education.

The dominant principle of campus life in the pre-sixties universities was *in loco parentis* (in place of parents). In those days students who violated curfew would arrive back at their dorms only to be greeted by a disapproving housemother. That same housemother

might be found another day baking cookies for the students she had grown to love, holding the hand of a homesick new student, or attempting to heal the broken heart of a failed romance.

Following the [political and civil] upheaval of the 1960s, *in loco parentis* was replaced with a more progressive philosophy that emphasized student responsibility. While standards for student behavior did not go by the wayside, administrators began to take a more hands-off approach in an effort to become less parental, thereby encouraging increased autonomy (p. 29).

Rodgers (1990) defines student development as “the ways that a student grows, progresses, or increases his or her developmental capabilities as a result of enrollment in an institution of higher education” (p. 27). Student development theory has formally been in existence since the 1960s (Maslow, 1943; Erikson, 1959), and today there are many theories of student development in existence today, ranging in focus from broad overviews to specific interest in one area of student identity. Studying student development theory equips practitioners to “identify and address student needs, design programs, develop policies, and create healthy college environments” (Evans, Forney, Guido-DiBrito, Patton, & Renn, 2010, p. 7).

The early works of student development theory are, for the most part, generalizations and over-arching theories to describe the masses. There are presently many categories for student development theory, such as psychosocial, cognitive-structural, integrative, or social identity based. McEwen (1996) identified four primary categories of college student development, which are further discussed in this chapter. Psychosocial theories focus on the issues that people encounter which causes development as well as the manner in which change is made within individuals. Cognitive-structural theories examine the way in which individuals understand and interpret the world in which they live. Integrative theories focus on the impact that multiple occurrences or events have on an individual. Theories that are based on social identity examine the affects that society’s viewpoint on an individual’s race, gender, or any other quality have on that individual’s development (Evans et al., 2010).

Maslow's Theory of Human Motivation (1943)

One of the foundational works in understanding development is Maslow's (1943) Theory of Human Motivation. In this work, Maslow explains the needs that individuals pursue in their lives. This theory begins with the explaining the physiological needs that humans seek to fulfill, such as shelter, food, and sex. Maslow's theory then progresses to safety, which includes protection, law and order. The next level of human motivation is based on love, or the ability for individuals to connect with others and create intimacy. As the theory progresses onward, the fourth level is comprised of self-esteem needs, such as achievement or reputation. The final level in Maslow's theory is self-actualization, in which individuals find fulfillment and encounter personal growth.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is developed in this manner because he believes that each stage is reliant upon the satisfaction of all prior stages. As Maslow (1943) states:

This means that the most prepotent goal will monopolize consciousness and will tend of itself to organize the recruitment of the various capacities of the organism. The less prepotent needs are minimized, even forgotten or denied. But when a need is fairly well satisfied, the next prepotent ('higher') need emerges, in turn to dominate the conscious life and to serve as the center of organization of behavior, since gratified needs are not active motivators (p. 394-395).

In this theory, Maslow (1943) exemplifies how human's actions are in line with achieving or reaching certain goals, whether they are shelter or companionship. This early work of development theory laid the groundwork for theorists to come. Through examination of Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, theorists were able to track the methods through which individuals develop the capacity to attain the needs for which they are searching.

Erik Erikson (1959/1980) *Identity and the Life Cycle*

An early theory of identity development is Erikson's (1959/1980) identity development theory. In his work, *Identity and the Life Cycle*, Erikson (1959/1980) exhibits the means in

which individuals attain those needs that Maslow (1943) articulated. This psychosocial theory was comprised of eight stages that one progresses through during a life cycle. Basic trust versus mistrust was the first stage that Erikson proposed, and in this stage, infants develop a capacity to trust their caregivers, which serve as a basis for building trust throughout their lifetimes. The second stage, autonomy versus shame and doubt, children begin to build a sense of independence upon their foundations of trust from the previous stage and also develop a balance between impulsiveness and compulsiveness. In the third stage, initiative versus guilt, a child's conscience becomes reality, giving children ownership of their choices between "right" and "wrong." In Erikson's fourth stage, industry versus inferiority, children recognize that they are rewarded for mastering certain skill sets and, conversely, they are also slighted if they are unable to perform certain duties. Identity versus identity diffusion (confusion), the fifth stage of Erikson's theory, is a pivotal stage in this theory, as it is at this point that individuals define and develop a sense of purpose based upon the development of their personal identity. The next stage, intimacy versus isolation, is the first stage of adulthood in Erikson's theory, whereby individuals develop deep and committed relationships with other individuals. Without a strong sense of identity, individuals at this stage will have a difficult time truly connecting with others. The seventh stage, generativity versus stagnation, is when an individual recognizes his or her desire and duty to give back to society and begin to intentionally leave behind a legacy, whether this is through becoming a parent or a social activist. The final stage in Erikson's theory is integrity versus despair, and in this stage, adults reflect upon their past with either pride or regret, coupled with an understanding that life is finite (Erikson, 1980).

Chickering and Reisser's Seven Vectors of Identity Development (1993)

Erikson's theory serves as one of the seminal works in student development theory, inspiring many other theorists, such as Arthur Chickering. Chickering (1969) introduced his seven vectors of development in order to demonstrate "the establishment of identity as the core developmental issue with which students grapple during their college years" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 65). Chickering used term *vectors of development* because "each seems to have direction and magnitude--even though the direction may be expressed more appropriately by a spiral or by steps than a straight line" (Chickering, 1969, p. 8). The seven vectors produced by Chickering in 1969 were: developing competence, managing emotions, developing autonomy, establishing identity, freeing interpersonal relationships, developing purpose, and developing integrity (Chickering, 1969). The similarities between Erikson's theory and Chickering's theory are evident, but Chickering goes into great detail about the impact of environmental factors on an individual's experience. Chickering also recognizes that individuals will progress through these vectors at different paces, for different reasons, and in some cases, in a different order than their peers.

In 1993, Chickering and Linda Reisser created the second iteration of the seven vectors from Chickering's 1969 work, *Education and Identity*. In this iteration, the seven vectors had been expanded on and were further developed. The revised vectors are: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Chickering's original work was conducted on a very specific population of white males at Goddard College in the 1960s. Reisser proposed revisiting the model, in addition to reviewing literature published and research conducted since the original

introduction of the vectors in 1969. Chickering and Reisser also sought to reiterate the vectors so that the model could "be useful to a wide range of people concerned to strengthen higher education's contribution to human development" (Chickering and Reisser, pg. xv).

MEANING-MAKING IN THEORY

As development theories became more focused and further enhanced, the theory categories mentioned earlier became more and more delineated. Not only were theorists concerned with the notion that individuals were developing; much of their focus shifted towards how individuals were reaching new levels of development. It is from this school of thought that cognitive-structural theories were developed, theories that focus on the process of making meaning in one's life.

Perry's Scheme of Intellectual and Ethical Development (1968)

Perry's (1968) scheme was originally a research project in which he aimed to simply describe the processes that students at Harvard and Radcliffe understand their surroundings, and today it is one of the most widely utilized theories in student development.

During the 1950s and early 1960s, while serving as the director of Harvard University's Bureau of Study Counsel, William G. Perry, Jr., along with his associates, engaged in research examining how students interpret and make meaning of the teaching and learning process (Evans et al., 2010, p. 84).

Perry's (1968) theory opens with an explanation of the various ways that individuals view the world in "unqualified polar terms of absolute right-wrong, good-bad" (p. 3), very similar to Erikson's (1959/1980) and Chickering's (1969, 1993) theories begin. Perry's (1968) scheme is comprised of nine positions that occur on a range of development. This range is marked by the concepts of dualism, multiplicity, and relativism. Dualism is a viewpoint constructed of two sides only, such as black and white or good and evil. Multiplicity is "honoring diverse views when the right answers are not yet known" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 86).

Relativism is an understanding that somewhere between two extremes lay differing viewpoints, some of which carry more weight than others. Another major theme in Perry's (1968) scheme is commitment, and a key element of this scheme is the process of commitment in relativism. In this process, an individual's decisions are based on a contextual view of his or her surroundings, and this decision-making process relies more on ethical development than a cognitive understanding. As stated in Evans et al. (2010), "The commitment process involves choices, decisions, and affirmations that are made from the vantage point of relativism" (p. 87). In other words, deciding which opinions or viewpoints carry more weight than others becomes an individual's personal choice or preference, rather than reaching that decision strictly from a basis of pure knowledge. This step in Perry's (1968) scheme illuminates the role of an individual's morals and values in the decision-making process, which is an extremely pivot part of the meaning-making process.

An individual's morals and values play a large role in a variety of decision-making processes—from career choice to political stance. These ideals that all individuals possess are generated developed through self-authorship. Theories centered on self-authorship are constructive-developmental in that they examine the evolution of how people assign meaning and understanding to their lives.

Kegan's Theory of the Evolution of Consciousness (1994)

One of the first theories solely focused on self-authorship was Kegan's (1994) Theory of the Evolution of Consciousness. In his theory, Kegan (1994) examined "the personal unfolding of ways of organizing experience that are not simply replaced as we grow but subsumed into more complex systems of mind" (p. 9). Kegan's (1994) model, exhibits the process of growth throughout a series increasingly complex means of understanding. Order 0 is infancy, when an

individual is not aware of existence outside of itself. The whole world is viewed as but an extension of the individual. In order 1, young children begin the process of meaning making, as there is an awareness of control over one's actions and movements in relation to an outside world. Order 2 is attained when an individual is able to categorize his or her surroundings and logically understand others as separate individuals. Individuals in order 3 are becoming more socialized, understanding that not only are others separate individuals, but becoming aware of the connections and distinctions between other separate entities. For example, recognizing commonalities or differences in one's classmates—such as hair color—aid a child in understanding his or her own identity. Self-authoring mind is the title of order 4, and in this order, an individual creates and sets his or her own values and beliefs. Order 5, self-transforming mind, is the final order in Kegan's (1994) theory, and in this order, individuals recognize the intersections of multiple individuals' values and beliefs systems and work towards supporting those intersections. Although Kegan (1994) states that many individuals do not reach this level of consciousness, order 5 illustrates an individual's capacity to hold a strong, well-educated worldview of his or her surrounds. Orders 4 and 5 of this theory exemplify the impact that meaning making has on self-authorship, as it is through the development and familiarity of personal values, ethics, and morals that individuals can then recognize those same ideas and structures in others.

Kegan's (1994) theory displays the action of meaning making throughout his orders. Each order is marked by the attainment of a new level of meaning making and understanding. Through his work, Kegan (1994) was able to illustrate that meaning making is the core of student development.

Baxter Magolda's Theory of Self-Authorship (2001)

Following Kegan's (1994) theory, Marcia Baxter Magolda (2001) developed a theory self-authorship, which she defines as "the internal capacity to define one's beliefs, identity, and social relations" (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 269). Baxter Magolda (2001) identified three major questions that all individuals answer for themselves. The first question addresses the epistemological dimension of development, in which individuals examine how they come to know information. The second question that Baxter Magolda (2001) categorizes is focused on intrapersonal development, in which an individual establishes his or her own idea of who it is they are as a person. The third area of questioning that Baxter Magolda (2001) addresses is the manner in which individuals assemble relationships with others, which Baxter Magolda (2001) terms as the interpersonal dimension of development.

Baxter Magolda (2001) examined her theory, as well as other student development theories, and expanded the ideas of self-authorship to address meaning making among college students. Baxter Magolda's (2009) research exhibits a strong correlation between learning and meaning making, defining learning as a way of understanding meaning. With this model, all learning achieved on a college campus or due to the college experience lead individuals to developing meaning in their lives. Baxter Magolda's (2009) studies show a tangible need for addressing the practice of meaning making in higher education.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

An important aspect of college student development, which was traditionally unaddressed, is the manner in which students develop a spiritual identity or a sense of spirituality. The works of Kegan (1994) and Baxter Magolda (2001) expanded the arena in which student development was studied, and this allowed some space for spirituality to be addressed in the meaning making

process. Research dedicated strictly to understanding the various ways in which students develop a sense of spiritual identity has become more and more prevalent in student development theory work.

Fowler's Stages of Faith Development (1981, 1996, 2000)

One of the first works that addresses spiritual development used in the study of college student development was Fowler's (1981, 1996, 2000) *Stages of Faith*. In his publication, Fowler (1981, 1996, 2000) identifies seven stages throughout a person's life cycle, which constitute the development of faith. Stage 0 is classified as the first two years of life, where one understands basic concepts such as nurture versus neglect, which Fowler (1981, 1996, 2000) entitled "Primal or Undifferentiated" faith. Stage 1, "Intuitive-Projective Faith" is characterized by a young child's exposure to the unconscious, and this stage revolves around one's growing perceptions of reality and a strengthening of imagination. "Mythic-Literal Faith" is the title of Stage 2. In this stage, Fowler (1981, 1996, 2000) notes that a person at this stage of faith development:

Develop[s] the ability to see perspectives other than their own, they are able to follow, make sense of, and remember stories told to them by their family and significant others. Without reflection, they accept these narratives literally and they form the basis of the person's beliefs (Evans et al., 2010, p. 198).

Stage 3 of Fowler's (1981, 1996, 2000) *Stages of Faith* is "Synthetic-Conventional Faith", wherein a person is able to analyze the world around them and the lessons they have learned in order to develop a stronger faith identity. While individuals in this stage are able to synthesize the elementary ideas from stage 2 to form a more practical identity of faith, they are unable to critique their faith at this time. Stage 4, "Individuative-Reflective Faith", is denoted by an individual's achievement of a self-authored identity and belief system, and this stage is most commonly explored during one's college-aged years. In this stage, an individual is able to

personalize their understanding of faith, self, and other based on their life experiences and value systems. “Conjunctive Faith”, stage 5, is attained during one’s later adulthood, and this stage is marked by a deeper understanding of the complexity of life and more open-minded approach to other ideas of faith. Stage 6, the final stage in Fowler’s (1981, 1996, 2000) depiction of faith development, is “Universalized Faith.” This stage is marked by an extreme shift in one’s locus of centrality, wherein one’s understanding of faith and love is centered in an omniscient viewpoint rather than through the lens of one’s personal experiences or knowledge (Fowler, 2000).

Fowler’s (1981, 1996, 2000) idea of faith development was able to connect psychological development to spiritual development. While this theory does not inherently focus on college students, it does address the type of development that college-aged individuals experience. Fowler’s (1981, 1996, 200) work also illustrates the acquisition of knowledge as a vital piece of faith development, which is paramount in understand college student development, as the collegiate experience is centered on higher learning. Fowler’s (1981, 1996, 2000) work opened the doors of understanding faith development in college students.

Love & Talbot’s “Defining Spiritual Development: A Missing Consideration for Student Affairs” (1999)

Patrick Love and Donna Talbot’s (1999) article, “Defining Spiritual Development: A Missing Consideration for Student Affairs” is quickly becoming a seminal work in spiritual development literature. Love & Talbot (1999) explain what spiritual development is and is not, examine the role spiritual development plays in student development, and recommends some options for student affairs to develop an integration of spiritual development on campuses. Both Love and Talbot have since produced other works on this topic, but it is this article that lays

much of the groundwork, in partnership with Fowler's (1981, 1996, 2000) *Stages of Faith Development*, for research and publications on spiritual development in higher education.

Love and Talbot (1999) address the difficulty in defining spiritual development by explaining that there are many possible approaches to understanding spirituality. Love and Talbot (1999) state that:

Spiritual development can include being in awe of one's surroundings, having a sense of wonder about the world, being receptive to the as yet explained, being alert and sensitive to changes in one's relationships, or being curious as to the root of our emotions (p. 364).

The authors define the delineation between religion and spirituality by explaining that religion is something largely prescribed to, with practices and tenets, whereas spirituality is a personal belief or system of beliefs based on one's worldview and values.

In this article, Love and Talbot (1999) analyze several landmark theories in student development and illustrate the connections between those theories and spiritual development, as well as exposing the gaps in practices in higher education as it relates to student development and spiritual development. Love and Talbot (1999) were able to spotlight not only the importance of spiritual development but also the methods through which administrators and practitioners in higher education can address this topic in order to better serve their student populations.

Works of Parks on Spirituality and Meaning Making in Young Adults

In 2000, Sharon Daloz Parks published her work *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, which is an examination of the importance of meaning making and spirituality in young adults, as well as an understanding of the practice of developing spirituality and meaning making in this population. This work was based on Parks' (1986) work entitled *The Critical Years*, and *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams* serves as a reiteration of *The Critical Years* with updates to address

changes in demographics and society. Parks' (2000) work is intended to two differing audience—young adults who are seeking a more developed sense of spiritual identity and those who mentor young adults during their self-development years. *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams* pinpoints seven different mentoring communities in a young adult's life, two of which are fields of education.

Parks (1986, 2000) addresses the chapter of life in which one becomes a young adult and the ways in which one reaches adulthood from that stage, especially as it relates to faith. Through her work, Parks (1986, 2000) is able to link common occurrences in life, such as death of a loved one, relationships, and imagination, with spirituality, as well as highlight the ever-present role spirituality plays in the various sectors of life. Parks (1986, 2000) additionally highlights mentoring communities available to young adults, one of which is higher education.

The importance of higher education in the role of student development is unquestionable, as the previous theories show. However, Parks (2000) illustrates how the collegiate experience also plays an extremely large part in the development of students' spirituality. Parks (2000) states:

Higher and professional education is distinctively vested with the responsibility of teaching critical and systemic thought and initiating young lives into a responsible apprehension first of the realities and questions of a vast and mysterious universe and second of our participation within it...Higher education is intended to serve as a primary site of inquiry, reflection, and cultivation of knowledge and understanding on behalf of the wider culture (p. 10).

Parks' (2000) work not only identifies the role of higher education in spiritual development, but it also addresses the ways in which student affairs professionals, professors, and instructors and their mentor relationships with young adults impact the development of a spiritual identity.

Through understanding the role it plays in development, higher education will be able to become more relevant to students and provide more service and support.

In manifold ways, higher education serves—consciously or unconsciously—as mentoring environment for the re-formation of meaning and faith. If higher education is to serve formation of faithful citizenship in a complex world, attention needs to be given to the myriad opportunities in the context of higher education to recover the practice of hearth, table, and commons, to reclaim the art and duty of contemplation, and to create safe spaces for constructive encounters with otherness. Moreover, higher education will reclaim its role as a community of imagination and a primary setting not only for preparing for a career but for planting the seeds of profession and vocation (Parks, 2000, 172).

Parks (2000) explains that higher education has traditionally been an area in which thinking and knowing were practices supported by deep exploration and asking difficult questions, but now it has become more focused on practical and technical knowledge and preparing students for the workforce. Despite the focus of curriculum or student affairs work, however, higher education is still a place where young adults undergo the process of spiritual exploration.

College Students' Belief and Values Survey

Another important work that has recently been published regarding spiritual development among college students is Astin, Astin, and Lindholm's (2011) *Cultivating the Spirit*. This work is based on a five-year study, entitled the College Students' Believe and Values (CSBV) Survey, which was conducted at UCLA, on the role of spirituality in college student's lives. The study, originally published in 2004 and later expanded and republished in 2007, based its findings on ten measures, five of which were based on spirituality and five of which were based on religiousness. Those measures affiliated with spirituality are Spiritual Quest, Equanimity, Ethic of Caring, Charitable Involvement, and Ecumenical Worldview. The measures that focused on religiousness are Religious Commitment, Religious Engagement, Religious/Social Conservatism, Religious Skepticism, and Religious Struggle. Data was collected during the longitudinal survey and scored along these measures. The findings of the study were that college students' religious participation tended to decrease during their collegiate experience,

but their connection to and focus on spirituality increased in college. From these findings, Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (2011) examine and explain the role of spirituality in higher education. The authors focus on practices in higher education that foster spiritual development, such as service-learning or interdisciplinary studies, as well as link spirituality to growth and development in higher education.

Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (2011) exhibit the important role of higher education in the holistic and spiritual development of college students, through both academic and non-academic lenses. The authors show the importance of holistic education practices in learning and knowledge acquisition, as well as student development. More importantly, the authors illustrate the powerful responsibility and function of higher education in supporting holistic and spiritual development.

The broad formative roles that college and universities continue to play in our society, combined with their long-term commitment to the ideals of 'liberal learning,' position them well to respond to the questions of how we can balance the exterior and interior aspects of students' lives more effectively; how we can fully support the development of students' inner qualities so that they might live more meaningful lives and cope with life's inherent uncertainties and discontinuities; and how we can thoroughly and intentionally prepare students to serve their communities, our society, and the world at large (Astin et al., 2011, 140).

CONCLUSION

Following Astin, Astin, and Lindholm's (2011) *Cultivating the Spirit*, this study was devised to examine and further understand what the role of spirituality in college student development. Astin, Astin, and Lindholm's (2011) following explanation of the issue surrounding spirituality in higher education serves as a key element of the overall purpose of this study.

We must remember that as young adults refine their identities, formulate adult life goals and career paths, and test their emerging sense of independence and interdependence,

they often grapple with issues of authenticity, meaning, and purpose... Undergraduates often expect their college experience to facilitate this discovery process (p. 138-139).

It is with this idea in mind that the following research has been collected and analyzed.

Understanding student development and how it functions will better allow practitioners to utilize the knowledge gained and inform better practices. This research will further examine the role of spiritual development in holistic development and furthermore student success.

CHAPTER 3 METHODS

Identity development in college students is an area in which many theories and works have been published. These works are published in an effort to create a deeper understanding of students so that professionals are better skilled to guide them toward success as an entire person. Through the study and application of these works, researchers and professionals are better able to possess an understanding of an individual student as a whole. There are numerous theories and works that address the multiple components of identity, such as race, gender, and sexual orientation. However, until recently, development in relation to faith and spirituality has been noticeably absent from this body of literature.

Spirituality serve as the foundation upon which individuals make sense of the world around them and understand its complexities, as a spiritual identity is where one fashions values, viewpoints, ethics, and principles. The purpose of this study is to identify the impact that spiritual development has on holistic development. It has been made evident through the works of Parks (1986, 2000), Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (2004, 2007, 2011), Love and Talbot (1999), and several other researchers and higher education practitioners that spirituality is an important part of a student's identity, whether that student believes in religion or not. However, it has not yet been determined how spirituality impacts an individual's development.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study examines the relationships that college students hold with their personal beliefs and spiritual identities, in an effort to better understand the role of spiritual development in an individual's overall development during the college years. This study will also investigate the current campus culture as it relates to spiritual development, with the intention of identifying recommendations and best practices related to fostering spiritual development on

campus for student affairs administrators and professionals. The research questions that directed this study are:

1. What role does spirituality play in holistic development?
2. How do college students identify spirituality?
3. In what ways are college students faced with spirituality?
4. How are college students served in terms of developing a spiritual identity?

RESEARCH APPROACH

This study is based in data collected through qualitative research methods, as the research questions of this study are best served and answered through the analyzation of open-ended questions gathered from personal interviews rather than statistical measures, due to the nature of the research questions and focus of the study (Creswell, 2005). In order to examine how spiritual development of college students impacts the overall development of the population, qualitative research methods were chosen as data collected in this manner can illustrate themes or trends among participants more so than numerical data, as each individual may have a unique understanding of the subject matter. The differences in understanding, defining, or explaining spirituality may be overlooked when quantifying responses from participants, and therefore, the ability for dialogue and open-ended answers allows more knowledge to be gained from this study.

The motivation for this study arose from my personal experiences as an undergraduate student in relation to spirituality. As a student who was involved on campus at a high level, I was never really confronted with the idea of my spiritual identity in college. Throughout my graduate work, I noticed a relation of much of the coursework to faith, spirituality, or religion, and it was then that I began to question the role that spiritual development plays in holistic

development of college students. My role in this study was to collect and provide student feedback as it relates to spiritual development and address the needs of college students in relation to the development of their spiritual identities.

SITE OF STUDY

Louisiana State University serves as the site for this study. The institution is a large, public, research institution in the southeastern United States with a national tier one ranking, and it has been in operation for over one hundred and fifty years. The student population is predominantly white, in-state residents (LSU Office of Budget and Planning, 2010). While the university does not endorse or promote any specific religious denomination or practice, there are several religious organizations on and around campus, including student organizations and churches. This site was selected because of my personal interest in conducting a religious study at a public institution in the Deep South, rooted in strong, historical, Christian traditions. As an example of the religious roots that impact this institution, the academic calendar includes a break from class for Mardi Gras due to the religious celebrations surrounding this event.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION

Participants for this study will be selected from the undergraduate population at Louisiana State University. The researcher will contact undergraduate students with whom the researcher has no advisory relationship and extend an invitation to participate in the study. The overall participant body will roughly represent the demographics of the institution, with respect to gender and race. As participants accept the invitation, a group of ten to fifteen participants will be assembled for initial data collection. Should there be a need to expand the participant pool, the same protocol will be followed.

ROLE OF RESEARCHER

In this study, I am the individual collector of data, and therefore, I also serve as research instrument in addition to the interview protocol. My interpretation of verbal participant responses, nonverbal signals from participants, and overall analyzation of the collected data impact the findings and conclusions of this study. In addition to my interpretation of the data, my personal background, interests, beliefs, and values serve as a framework in the interpretation of the data.

My personal experiences with religiosity and spirituality led me to explore the topic of this thesis. I attended parochial school for both my elementary and secondary education, and I was raised as a Catholic. Prior to my collegiate experience, everything that I learned or experienced was based in Catholicism in some way. While I thoroughly enjoyed my faith and the practices that surrounded it, when I entered college, I noticed myself moving farther away from organized religion because there was no longer anyone else holding me accountable to my faith but myself. I began to develop my own spiritual identity, based on my personal values, beliefs, and styles, and this identity was one that did not require much reflection, worship, or belief at all. At that point in time, this idea of spirituality was one that worked well for me, but the further I progressed into adulthood, I realized that my life and its various parts seemed to be disjointed, and I also noticed that there was something missing from my life that left me wanting more.

As a graduate student, I came into contact with some students and professionals who had a strong spiritual identity during their undergraduate experiences. I recognized that for these individuals, their academic, professional, and personal goals and successes were all rooted in some sort of spirituality, and this foundation served as a point of reference for understanding for

them. Despite the common experiences we may have shared, their connection to faith during these experiences made the lessons they learned very different from mine. I realized that while these people were developing, their adherence to a spiritual identity added another layer of development and growth that I had not experienced. It is from this realization that the topic of spiritual development was selected.

DATA COLLECTION

The data for this study was collected through personal interviews, conducted by the researcher. Personal interviews were structured along an interview protocol, which mainly served as a guide for discussion between the participant and the researcher, provided in this work as Appendix A. The interview protocol consists of open-ended questions in an effort to encourage open dialogue between the participant and the research while framing and guiding discussion and data collection with the research questions in mind. All personal interviews were digitally recorded, and nonverbal communications between participant and researcher were noted during the interview process.

The data collected from personal interviews was interpreted by examining themes or trends among participant responses. For this study, a theme is identified as a recurring message from multiple participants. While all participant interviews were conducted with the same set of questions, the direction and content of each interview varied based upon the participant responses. The themes that arose were heavily exhibited and addressed in the participant responses, due to the diversity among interviews, and therefore, the selected themes serve as the strongest commonalities among the differing responses. The themes gathered from data collection served as the foundation upon which the conclusions and recommendations of this study were created.

TRIANGULATION AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

This data set for this study was assembled from multiple sources, and it is through this assembly that triangulation was achieved. Participants in this study represented a variance in gender, race, ethnicity, and age, and these individuals all self-identified unique and personal ways in which they view spirituality. As previously stated, the interviews of each participant varied in content based upon the responses of each participant, but the overall themes presented from this study emerged nonetheless due to their prevalence in relation to the subject matter.

Triangulation was achieved in this study because of the array of participants, as well as their responses. Because of the triangulation of the study, the findings and recommendations presented from analyzing the collected data can be considered trustworthy. The identification of trends of this study resulted from my own analyzation of the data, as well as through a review of the data by a faculty member, and from this analyzation, recurring ideas and themes from the data set were deemed trends of this study.

DATA AUDIT

The data collected for this study, as well as the analyzation of this data, has been recorded and protected. The holding of this data will allow for future studies in spiritual development to be educated by the data that has been collected here. As knowledge and literature related to spiritual development in higher education expands, the information collected in this study may provide additional insights than the findings presented in this work. Also, the preservation of this data will allow for future researchers to examine and duplicate this study. Duplication of this study may prove difficult, as the data collected and findings from analyzation of the data are limited by the time, place, and manner in which the study was conducted.

LIMITATIONS

This study was limited in a number of ways. First, the study was one conducted at one institution, which does not allow for strong recommendations to be made as it applies to higher education as a whole. Secondly, the number of student participants for this study was small, and therefore, the findings of this study are not generalizable to all students that this institution. Lastly, this study was conducted in a relatively short time period, and it serves as a snapshot of students of this institution in one semester. A longer time period for data collection would have allowed for, not only more student participants, but a larger variation in data sources, as students could have been surveyed throughout their collegiate experience, and the process of spiritual development could have been portrayed.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

The main objective of this study was to better understand the ways in which college students view and utilize spirituality in their lives. The findings of this study further emphasized the importance of understanding spirituality. Each participant articulated the different roles of spirituality in their lives, different definitions of spirituality, and different methods of developing, expressing, and strengthening spirituality. Just as one's identity is unique and exclusive to that individual, so too is spirituality.

The data collected in this study showcases how college students explain spirituality, the various ways in which spirituality impacts the daily life of a college student, and the relationship between religion and spirituality as viewed by college students. This study examined personal beliefs and views on spirituality as well as the relationship of academic and non-academic campus occurrences with spirituality. From this data, three common themes emerged: spirituality as modeling the way, spirituality as a personal realm, and discomfort in discussing spirituality on campus.

SPIRITUALITY AS MODELING THE WAY

As previously mentioned, spirituality is a unique element of one's identity, and the role of spirituality in one's life differs between individuals. While spirituality is typically thought of as an invisible component of one's identity, the participants of this study frequently vocalized a strong belief in that spirituality is expressed through the ways in which an individual lives out his or her life. A person's spirituality, whether it is based on religious beliefs or not, is exemplified through the choices and actions that a person makes, and this walking the walk is an important part of the spiritual identity, as it allows a person to practice his or her beliefs. As stated by one student, "I try to use my deeds as a way to show [others] my kind of spirituality, through my

actions rather than speaking (George, male, sophomore, African American).” This expression of spirituality is also a tool that individuals use in order to further examine and develop their spiritual beliefs. As stated by Scott, Buehler, and Felder (2001), acting in line with one’s beliefs and values is one of the “essential aspects of spirituality” (p. 103). “By taking conscious, deliberate steps to manifest his personal philosophy in everyday life, a person begins to live the spiritual life” (Scott, Buehler, & Felder, 2001, p. 104). Another participant of this study said that spirituality was important to her because:

It gives you a little bit more meaning to life. To know that you’re doing good and it’s for a better purpose – that’s what I do. You don’t want to go around being a bad person. You always try to do something for the better because you think it’s going to help out another person, and that’s really what spirituality means to me (Taylor, female, sophomore, White).

For this student, as well as many others who participated in this study, modeling the way is one of the strongest ways to express spirituality, as it allows for one to develop and exercise their beliefs as well as participate in the community and their surroundings.

The ways in which students make meaning in their lives also model their spirituality and spiritual beliefs. As stated by Tisdell (2003):

Many adults indicate that [spirituality] is a major organizing principle that guides their life choices, including choices of lovers and intimate friends and the kind of work that they see as their vocation as they make meaning of their life experience... Individuals do what they feel called to do—what gives their life meaning (p. 31).

The meaning that one develops through understanding or exploring his or her spirituality is played out in the decisions, choices, and actions of that person’s life. Baxter Magolda’s (2009) work on meaning-making and self-authorship is illustrated in this trend, as students’ actions and choices line up with those ideas or areas in life in which they find meaning. Modeling the way of

one's spiritual identity allows that person to develop self-authorship and meaning in life, as the individual is carving his or her own path in life based upon their own ideas, beliefs, and values.

Leading by example is not only a way in which students express their spirituality, but it is also considered by students when looking for guidance. College is a difficult time for many students, and searching for answers to life's difficult questions often leads students to look for role models or mentors in the higher education setting. It is easy to develop an understanding of a person's morals or values set based upon the way in which they live their life, and students often follow those who seem to have a values set that is either similar to or more desirable than their own.

One participant of this study claimed that she had a lot of difficulty expressing her spirituality because she was unsure of how others would perceive her. She reflected on watching her mentors express their values and that, by observing their expression of values and beliefs, her interest in those individuals grew stronger. She gave the following example of this:

The other day, my accounting teacher, who likes to throw in life lessons in the middle of his lectures, was talking about the devastation in Japan and how all of our stresses can't amount to what they are going through. He openly prayed in class, and I really respected that. It showed that he was less of a professor—someone who didn't care about students, didn't care about their well-being—and more of a person... I really enjoyed seeing that he could talk about his values so openly to students. I realized that he has two purposes. One is to teach accounting. The other is to make sure that we are becoming well-rounded students, both on the personal and academic aspects. I definitely admired him for that (Regina, female, sophomore, White).

Outward expressions of spirituality, whether performed or observed, play a strong role in developing a spiritual identity. Spirituality begins inside of a person, and for that reason, it may be difficult for some to fully commit to their spirituality without first testing their beliefs, morals, or values in real world situations. These acts serve as an experiment or testing of beliefs, and

they allow individuals to experience a greater understanding of what it is that they believe or value.

SPIRITUALITY AS A PERSONAL REALM

While many participants do value modeling the way, spirituality is a private matter. Even if an individual derives his or her spirituality from religion or religious beliefs or from observing mentors and role models, the spiritual identity is unique to the individual based upon the needs and role of spirituality in that person's life as well as the individual's life experiences. The personal realm in which spirituality exists is largely impacted by life experiences, as these experiences both shape the spiritual identity of an individual and are also subject to interpretation through one's spiritual identity. Because of its personal nature, many students look inward when reworking and developing their spiritual identities. Many participants of this study vocalized reflection, alone time, and private prayer as ways in which they reconnect or replenish their spirituality. While outward forces of one's surroundings impact his or her spirituality, it is within oneself that a spiritual identity is formed.

As previously mentioned in Chapter One, developing a widely accepted definition of spirituality is a difficult task. It should be noted that each participant of this study was asked to offer his or her own definition of the term, as their definitions create the framework through which their responses can be analyzed, and the responses from these students exemplify the various ways in which spirituality was defined in this study. One student defined spirituality in the following way:

[Spirituality is] the framework you try to put everything around you in. Most people use it to guide their lives. In the example of religion, you have people who commit their lives to God and what they believe His purposes are. Then there are people who commit themselves to just bettering the world. But it seems to me to be a framework, a paradigm, or the rose-colored glasses that you see everything through. You want to make the world fit the way you feel (Fiona, female, junior, White).

In this definition, Fiona describes spirituality as a framework for understanding the world. When observing spirituality through this definition, it is easy to relate it back to meaning-making, an idea that is essential to the personal realm. However, an overwhelming number of respondents tended to agree more with a definition such as the following:

I would describe it as a bigger belief, bigger than yourself, that you deem to follow, that you live your life by, and how you set an example for others. That's how I would define spirituality (Regina).

Both of these definitions are in line with the meaning behind spirituality as defined by literature and scholars. However, it is interesting to observe the differences in the two—one being based on viewpoint only and the other focusing on action. While neither definition is more correct than any other, this differences among the two is a testament to the finding that spirituality exists in a personal realm, where the individual formulates values, ethics, and meaning.

Many of the theories of development discussed in Chapter Two include an important step or phase that involves developing or shaping identity or creating a strong sense of self. This personal component of development is reflected in the spiritual journeys of college students. Many participants in this study explained that in order to understand their spirituality and make meaning of their world, an internal assessment of oneself had to occur. Tisdell (2003) explains this process in greater detail, as it was observed through a study of her own.

A key point here is that spirituality is about *moving toward* this greater sense of one's deepest spirit or more authentic identity. Since most of the participants [of Tisdell's study] were theists, they believed in a core self, or a 'core essence' that was God-given and part of the divine spirit, a part of each person's uniqueness. Buddhists might call this 'Buddha nature.' Those in the study who were uncomfortable with the idea of a personal God referred to this idea as the higher self. Part of their spiritual journey was *moving toward* knowing and operating from this 'core self,' this more authentic identity (p. 33).

This utilization of spirituality to better understand oneself was echoed throughout the study, as participants articulated the way in which they use their spirituality to understand themselves and the world around them. However, because of the intense relationship with the individual and spirituality, and despite the fact that the participants of this study expressed beliefs in modeling the way, many students seem apprehensive to engage in discussions revolving around spirituality on campus.

DISCOMFORT WITH SPIRITUAL DISCOURSE ON CAMPUS

As previously mentioned in Chapter One, the role of the university was originally focused on liberal arts and character education, but as colleges and universities began to further develop, the focus of postsecondary education shifted away from these ideals.

Spirituality was accepted as a way of knowing and as a means of interpretation and thus understanding and meaning. The rise of the American research university as a twentieth-century response to a growing belief in and dependence on science and technology replaced the holistic view of truth and of education with a unified sense of education as a scientific search from one truth—or “the truth”—about the nature of reality. The idea of multiple interpretations fell out of favor or came to be regarded as the preoccupation of liberal arts colleges and not the philosophical realm of a “true” (that is, research) university (Murphy, 2005, p. 24-25).

The emphasis on science and technology, coupled with education’s often-misinterpreted view of the Establishment Clause, has created an environment in higher education’s classrooms that is not conducive to spiritual development. It also seems as though in current American culture, spirituality is such a personal topic that it is socially unacceptable to discuss it.

Participants in this study were asked if they discussed spirituality or spiritual issues with others on campus, either in the classroom, in extracurricular meetings, or in casual conversations. The resounding answer from almost all participants was that they seldom discussed spiritual issues in the classroom or in their extracurricular activities, and if they did discuss spirituality or spiritual issues, those conversations only involved individuals with whom the participants felt

safe and shared similar viewpoints. There was an overwhelming sense of discomfort among the participants when asked about spiritual discussions on campus. The most discomfort seemed to arise in the area of academics.

Many students expressed a reluctance to bring up the topic of spirituality or engage in a spiritual discussion in the classroom because of the fear of biases, hatred, or pressures as a result of presenting an opposing viewpoint from that of one's professor or classmates. One participant noted:

You will find that professors who want to talk about spirituality and things like religion, faith, and beliefs are going to put their personal views in. People are going to feel pressured. They want to say that this is what they believe, but they feel that if they don't agree with the professor's views that it may affect everything that is irrelevant [to the discussion], like schoolwork and grades (George).

It seems as though because of the long-standing separation of religion and education, the impact on these newer ideas and prevalence of spirituality among college students, no matter how far removed from religious practice or doctrine, are still not commonplace in the college classroom.

One participant of this study, who has a strong sense of spiritual identity, and engages in spiritual discussions on campus quite often as the leader of one of the campus ministry organizations on campus, told the following story of his interaction with difficult spiritual discussions in the classroom and its impact on his spiritual identity:

I wouldn't call them discussions. I would say it's certain people offering their opinions. It's definitely professors offering their opinions and not leaving it open to discussion. I don't think the classroom would be an appropriate place for discussions like that, unless it was a course centered on that topic, but I haven't been in a class like that.

A lot of my professors will take time out of their teaching to denounce the beliefs that religious people might hold, like Creationism. I actually took an Evolution course, and instead of just talking about the Theory of Evolution, the entire final unit of the course was denouncing Creationism. From a teaching perspective, I don't know if I agree with that, but it was a good thing to go through.

It makes you stronger. When you encounter those things, it causes me to look up definitions and be sure I know what I believe, that I understand the beliefs I am choosing to hold and the religion I am choosing to practice, and just to find what I feel is the truth

or make truth out of it. Just to reinforce my foundation or my spiritual armor in those times. It's definitely made me grow (Paul).

While this is not an ideal situation in which an educator would hope that as student expands his or her spiritual identity, it is a testament to the fact that students who do have a strong spiritual identity are integrating those beliefs into their academics.

Outside of academics, participants also expressed a fear of offending someone. Not only is spirituality an extremely personal component of one's identity, but also for many people, spirituality is closely linked to religion or religious beliefs. Many students expressed that they were reluctant to discuss spirituality with their friends or classmates because of the uncertainty of where one stood in terms of spiritual beliefs. Unlike other aspects of identity, such as race or gender, a person's spirituality is typically not visible, and therefore it is not easy to identify where a classmate or colleague may place his or her beliefs. A participant from this study voiced her reluctance to discuss spirituality with others in the following way, "When you think of spirituality, you think of religion immediately, and that's one of those hot topics that has everyone in a fuss before they even say anything" (Fiona). Many of the other participants voiced similar opinions.

CONCLUSION

The main themes identified in this study were spirituality as modeling the way, spirituality as a personal realm, and a discomfort with spiritual discourse on campus. These themes were very prevalent throughout almost all of the participant responses, and in summation, it seems as though college students today thoroughly believe that actions speak louder than words. Spirituality is a very personal idea, one in which many people use as the foundation for creating identity and meaning in life, and the most popular way of expressing one's spirituality is through living a life that is congruent with one's spiritual identity. However, because of the

frequent variance in identities among individuals, many college students are extremely hesitant to discuss spiritual issues on campus. For many students, religion plays some role in their spirituality, and the uncertainty of the role of religion, and by association, spirituality, on campus leaves the majority of students uncomfortable with sharing this aspect of their lives through conversation. Their preference is to model the behaviors, values, and ethics that they hold in esteem and allow their actions to serve as examples of their beliefs.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

It has been made evident, through the findings of this study presented in Chapter Four, that the spiritual identities of today's college students are affected by their collegiate experiences, and the spiritual identities of college students is something in which they place great value. In fact, nine of the ten participants of this study identified as spiritual. As professionals in higher education, we must be aware of whom we are serving, and in order to be successful, we must be able to connect with our students and understand the things that are relevant, important, and meaningful to them. The trends from this study present several implications for both practice and research as related to spirituality.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Service-Learning and Community Engagement

Students who participated in this study voiced a strong belief in modeling the way in terms of expressing their spirituality. Service-learning courses and community engagement initiatives are two areas in higher education in which students can connect to and further explore their spirituality. These types of services engage students with their peers and their communities, exposing students to various types of people and environments, while allowing them to exercise their beliefs of modeling the way.

One of the key components of service-learning and community engagement activities is personal reflection. As stated by Johnson (2006), "Reflection is an important way that students can actively invest in crafting, understanding, owning, and expressing [the narrative] by which their sense of self, fundamental values, motivating commitments, and dispositions to action are bound together in a unified whole" (p. 221). The personal nature of spirituality relies heavily on

reflection and revisiting topics that create questions within one's identity, and almost all service opportunities on a college campus are centered on reflection and student growth.

Service-learning and service opportunities in higher education also allow students to have spiritual experiences in the classroom or on campus without having to disclose any beliefs or engage in conversations that may cause them to feel uncomfortable. As defined by Fried (2001), "A spiritual experience is one in which a person feels his or her connection to a much broader domain than is apparent in the minutiae of daily life" (p. 263). By participating in these experiences on campus, students may become more open to discussing spirituality with their classmates, faculty, advisors, and administrators.

Practitioners in student affairs should explore ways to infuse service-learning or service-based initiatives with opportunities that will allow student to explore spiritual growth. Incorporating spiritual discussions and activities in service allows for a deeper experience and, therefore, stronger and more effective programming. By making service more meaningful to student participants through programmatic efforts centered on spiritual development, faculty and professional staff will also be more efficient stewards of their funding, resources, and time, though creating deeper, more impactful lessons for students.

Leadership Development

Another way for students to develop their spiritual identity on campus is by participating in leadership activities, through which they are able to model their spirituality in a personal and meaningful way. Berty (2007) explains that, "The study of leadership creates opportunities to question and seek answers to their purpose in life while determining how that purpose affects those they choose to lead" (p. 260). Developing a strong leadership skill set relies on many of the same components that can be seen when developing a spiritual identity, such as reflection, self-

assessment of behavior, and an assessment of values. Passion, congruence, and integrity are only a few themes in both leadership and spiritual development literature and practice.

Leadership development models are aimed at teaching individuals to be authentic, congruent, ethical, and committed citizens in their communities, such as the Relational Leadership Model (Komives, Lucas, and McMahon, 1998) and the Social Change Model of Leadership (Komives, Wagner, and Associates, 2009). These two models are centered around many of the same concepts that individuals encounter on their own personal spiritual journeys. Berty's (2007) description of the Relational Leadership Model exhibits this idea further by saying, "The Relational Leadership Model is comprised of five elements: inclusion, empowerment, ethics, purposefulness, and process-orientation" (Berty, 2007, p. 261). Similarly, the Social Change Model of Leadership consists of three domains, Individual, Group, and Community, and focuses on seven components of leadership: Consciousness of Self, Congruence, Commitment, Controversy with Civility, Common Purpose, Collaboration, and Citizenship (Komives et al., 2009). The elements that make up successful leaders are also the elements that comprise and contribute to spiritual identities. If spirituality consists of beliefs, passions, and actions, then studying leadership development through a spiritual lens will allow for more authentic and genuine leaders to emerge from higher education. Hoppe (2001) writes, "If we lead from the spirit within us, what we become will be whole and authentic" (p. 91).

Professionals in higher education should make a more concerted effort of focusing on spirituality in leadership development. For example, in the Social Change Model of Leadership (Komives, Wagner, et al., 2009), the Individual values of Consciousness of Self, Congruence, and Commitment easily lend themselves to the topic of personal spirituality. Consciousness of Self is the ability to self-identify one's values system and personal traits and being mindful of the

outward reflection of those values and traits. Congruence is behaving in-line with one's values and beliefs. Commitment is defined in this model as "the passion within that compels one to act to achieve a certain outcome" (Komives, Wagner, et al., 2009, p. 366). All of these values are linked to spirituality, as they are formulated from within an individual and are unique to that person. Therefore, by integrating spirituality into leadership development, the process that student go through will allow for stronger results, as they will be more in touch with these ideas and values because of the examination through a spiritual context.

Career Decision-Making and Exploration

For many students, choosing a career path is a difficult and often-frustrating task in the collegiate experience. Upon entering college, some students declare a major, but many students change majors at least once, if not multiple times, during their undergraduate careers. This can be attributed to the new exposure to different people, cultures, and viewpoints that one encounters during college and the impact that these new factors have on one's interests, values, and aspirations.

Career service departments on campus are already serving the needs of students who are looking to identify a career path through conducting assessments of personality types, values, interests, and skills. However, it is imperative that the spiritual component of the student be taken into consideration when career counseling. Higher education is not a factory where students are trained in specific skill sets to be released into the workforce. Career decisions are based on where students find fulfillment, joy, and that allow them to utilize their services in an optimal way. Therefore, attending to the spiritual component of identity when serving students in career decision-making will allow professionals to best serve those students in need.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings of this study leave some areas regarding spirituality among college students in need of more research in order to develop a stronger idea of the development of spiritual identity. As stated in Chapter Three, the limitations of this study also restrict the findings in ways that further research would provide deeper knowledge. The areas of further research concerning spiritual identity development in higher education are vast, and any further research related to the topic of this study would prove beneficial.

It would be interesting and helpful to examine spiritual identities and development among differing identity categories, such as gender, ethnicity, and race. Spiritual identity, like many other forms of identity, is rooted in these areas, as one's gender or ethnicity undoubtedly plays a role in identity. Research comparing and contrasting the development of spirituality among college students from differing categories would not only allow higher education practitioners as stronger knowledge of spiritual development, but it would also help to inform current understands of the different categories examined.

Another area in which further research would be beneficial is in studying millennial students and their experiences with spiritual development during the college years. Much of the literature currently available on spiritual development in college is centered on Generation X, and the differences between these two generations are many. Understanding the ways in which current college students view, practice, and question spirituality would permit those professionals in higher education today a deeper knowledge of the students whom they are serving.

The impact of spirituality on sexual identity is an additional topic in which there is little knowledge currently being adapted into practice. Although the scale of this study was

considerably small, spirituality and sexuality still arose in the findings, which attest to the fact that for many students, college is a time when they begin to explore, understand, and identify with their sexuality. Considering spirituality as an issue when counseling those students who are going through a sexual identity crisis, or vice versa, is a skill that will aid professionals in serving students in a more holistic and efficient manner.

CONCLUSION

With student success at the forefront of the work of student affairs practitioners, understanding spirituality within the context of higher education is a key component of fostering the success of the whole student. It is important for administrators and practitioners to be aware of students' spiritual needs, as well as develop the skills in which to help guide and assist students along their spiritual journeys during the college years. There is a strong correlation between spirituality and higher education. It is during these years that many individuals are moving towards a stronger sense of independence and self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001, 2009). Many students of higher education are also engaged on a spiritual journey as this time, as they worldviews begin to change, thus impacting their spirituality. Both inside and outside the classroom, college and university campuses play host to spiritual development. Miller (2001) illustrates this relationship between spirituality and higher education:

Spirituality involves exploration of the multiple manifestations of that which has enduring meaning; exploration of the sacred dimension of our being, our work, our relationships. From this perspective, spiritual issues are everywhere: the amount of waste produced on camps is a spiritual issues; the extent of alcohol abuse is a spiritual issue; conflict between colleagues is a spiritual issue; leadership is a spiritual issue; learning is a spiritual issue. Spirituality is not something special—not bounded to a place of worship or practices of certain traditions—but involves the whole of what we do in higher education (p. 299).

Not only is spirituality involved in what we do, but it is also a relevant topic to today's college students. Incorporating spirituality into student affairs work and practice will not only allow

practitioners to engage with students on a deeper level, but it will also strengthen current practices in place to support student success.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Spirituality and Spiritual Development in Higher Education Student Interview Protocol

Thank you for coming in today. My name is Mary Claire Gilder, and I am graduate student in the Higher Education Administration program in the College of Education here at LSU. I am conducting a study on spiritual development among college students as a part of my Master's thesis. I am particularly interested in learning about college students' spiritual beliefs and their search for meaning and purpose during their undergraduate experience. Please know that there are no right or wrong answers during our discussion, and that the information you present will remain confidential.

Before we begin, I would like to share with you an information sheet on the purpose for and protocol of this research study. I'll give you a few minutes to read it and confirm that you are still interested in participating. If you are, I ask that you sign two copies, one of which will be yours to keep and one will be for my records.

I would like to reiterate a couple of key points from the information sheet.

- 1. You can share what you wish to share. If you would rather not respond to a certain question, please feel no pressure to do so.*
- 2. You are free to choose not to participate in this study at any point in time during this interview.*
- 3. I am asking your permission to record the interview. When the dialogue is transcribed, I will insert a pseudonym for you in order to keep your identity confidential.*

Questions:

1. Do you consider yourself a spiritual person? Why or why not? If yes, what are the primary reasons why spirituality is important to you?
2. How do you define spirituality?
3. Patrick Love and Donna Talbot (1999) define spirituality and spiritual development through these five ideas or processes:
 - “... an internal process of seeking personal authenticity, genuineness, and wholeness as an aspect of living;
 - ...the process of continually transcending one's current locus of centrality;
 - ...developing a greater connectedness to self and others through relationships and union with community;
 - ... deriving meaning, purpose, and direction in one's life;
 - ... involves an increasing openness to exploring a relationship with an intangible and pervasive power or essence that exists beyond human existence and rational human knowing.”

The accompanying handout helps to illustrate those ideas a bit more. Do you agree with this definition? Why or why not?

4. Do you discuss spiritual issues or questions with others on campus? Why or why not?
5. Have you had discussions about spirituality in any of your classes? Would you like to have more opportunities for such discussions? Why or why not?
6. How do you express, nurture, or replenish your spirituality?
7. How have your experiences in college shaped you as an individual?
8. How has your identity changed as a result of attending college?
9. How have your experiences in college shaped your spirituality?
10. How has your spirituality changed as a result of attending college?
11. What could help to make your college experience more spiritually meaningful to you?
12. How would you like to see yourself evolving spiritually in the future?

APPENDIX B

OVERVIEW OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT PROVIDED TO PARTICIPANTS

Defining Spiritual Development: A Missing Concern for Student Affairs (1999)

Patrick Love & Donna Talbot

DEFINITIONS BY LOVE AND TALBOT				
"...an internal process of seeking personal authenticity, genuineness, and wholeness as an aspect of identity development."	"... the process of continually transcending one's current locus of centrality."	"...developing a greater connectedness to self and others through relationships and union with the community."	"...deriving meaning, purpose, and direction in one's life."	"... involves an increasing openness to exploring a relationship with an intangible and pervasive power or essence that exists beyond human existence and rational human knowing."
"Seeking personal authenticity, genuineness, and wholeness involves the process of developing a sense of self that is unitary, consistent, congruent with our actions and beliefs, and true to our sense of self."	"Locus of centrality" means the place from which you draw your centeredness (egocentricity, humanocentricity, geocentricity, etc.) The process of transcending one's locus of centrality focuses on gaining new knowledge and experiences and being aware of "something beyond the spatial-temporal world" affecting your environment.	" In order to know something, we depend on the consensus of the community - a consensus so deep that we often draw upon it unconsciously" (Palmer, 1993). Knowledge is an important part of spirituality, and since this act is communal, there is an important emphasis on developing relationships and understanding our knowledge through those ties.	Spirituality and spiritual development should guide and assist you in understanding the meaning and purpose of life's events, and it should also give you a direction on which to focus the knowledge gained in your journey towards spiritual development.	Spirituality also relates to the relationship with and openness to any influence of force that exists beyond oneself or a force accessible only through faith, hope, love and other nonrational aspects of human experience.
A way of self-examination in which we try to line up our values, goals, and actions together	Understanding our role in the larger scheme of things; Being aware that we are not the only players on field	Creating relationships through which we can learn more about ourselves and our community	Developing an overall reason for being through gaining knowledge, and allowing that reason to give our actions focus	Being open to and curious about the "thing" in our lives in which we believe or place our faith and engaging on a continual path towards knowledge about it.
EXPLANATION OF DEFINITIONS				

APPENDIX C

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

NAME	GENDER	CLASSIFICATION	ETHNICITY
Fiona	Female	Junior	White
George	Male	Sophomore	African American
Marie	Female	Junior	White
Julio	Male	Junior	White
Janice	Female	Senior	African American
Ringo	Male	Senior	African
Taylor	Female	Sophomore	White
Paul	Male	Senior	White
Regina	Female	Sophomore	White
John	Male	Senior	White

VITA

Mary Claire Gilder is currently a second-year master's student studying higher education and student affairs at Louisiana State University. A native of Louisiana, Ms. Gilder received her Bachelor of Arts in history from Louisiana State University in 2009. Ms. Gilder currently works at Louisiana State University in Campus Life, focusing on community service, leadership development, student involvement, and student programming.